

Clean Cities Alternative Fuel Price Report

History

Clean Cities initiated efforts to collect, analyze and report alternative fuel prices in 2000. Clean Cities has been and continues to be the only entity tracking alternative fuel prices for summary and public distribution. The quarterly Alternative Fuel Price Reports, beginning with the May 2000 report, are posted at www.afdc.energy.gov/price_report.html.

Initially, a small sample of prices was collected. From 2000 – 2004, fuel prices were collected by staff at the six U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Clean Cities Project Management Centers (PMCs). Each PMC provided an average of five price points from its region. Since 2004, Clean Cities Coordinators have been asked to report fuel prices from their coalition regions. This approach provides a larger sample and a better representation of prices throughout the region and the country.

In 2006, annual funds were made available to officially designated coalitions through coordinator support contracts for their data collection efforts. Reporting alternative fuel prices is one of the coordinator support contract requirements.

Data Collection Procedure and Data Analysis

For the quarterly price report, Timothy Porco, LTI, makes a general request to all current Clean Cities Coordinators, Coordinators from coalitions that are working toward designation, and a selection of alternative fuel providers and key stakeholders to submit regional price information for both alternative and conventional fuels. Prices are collected on all major alternative fuels currently in widespread use (natural gas, propane, biodiesel, and ethanol). Prices are also collected for conventional fuels at stations which also sell alternative fuels, or at nearby stations. Prices are collected from public and private refueling stations throughout the country.

The prices collected for the report represent retail, at-the-pump sales prices for each fuel, including federal and state motor fuel taxes. In some cases, prices are collected from government or utility refueling facilities and motor fuel taxes are not included in the reported prices. In these instances, the appropriate federal and state motor fuel taxes are added to the reported price to provide a more representative basis for comparison of fuel prices for the purpose of the report. In some cases, states may charge a flat annual fee for state motor fuel taxes, especially for gaseous fuels like compressed natural gas (CNG) and liquefied propane gas (LPG). These flat fees are not considered in the prices reported in the quarterly report.

Prices are collected once each quarter during a specified two week time period. This approach was suggested by coordinators to ensure that the data reflects a specific point in time. A total of 2000-2200 prices from an average of 84 coalitions are collected per report, which equates to an average of 25 data points from each coalition. Coordinators and fuel providers are also requested to provide the date on which they collected the prices. Prices are also collected from public sources such as the E85 price boards for the states of Minnesota and Illinois, and summaries of E85 prices for Colorado available from the Colorado Corn Growers Association.

To determine the average cost for each fuel, the data collected are placed into a database that contains the location, the price, and the date on which each price was collected, as well as a tag for the

quarterly price report for which the data were collected. All prices collected for each quarterly report are averaged together by region to determine an overall average price for each fuel and region. This averaging does mask the short-term fluctuations in price from day to day for each fuel, but the averages do allow for longer-term trend analysis between reports (Has E85 generally increased in price since the last report? Have gasoline prices fluctuated in the same time period?). It should be noted that although prices are collected on different dates, all prices for a given report are collected within a two week period between the initial data request and the due date, so the average price gives a reasonable look at the price for a given fuel during the period in which prices were collected, and does allow for comparison across quarters.

Alternative Fuel Price Report Usage

In calendar year (CY) 2013, the fuel prices page on the AFDC was viewed 41,000 times and the price reports were downloaded 11,583 times. New West staff receives an average of two inquiries per month for specific information on alternative fuel prices. The month that a new report is posted on the website leads to a spike of an average of four inquiries per month. The EERE Information Center receives two to three alternative fuel price inquiries per month. Inquiries are made by a vast array of entities, including consumers, fleets, media, individuals, and teams working to develop alternative fuel projects.

If you know of other stakeholders that would like to provide prices for alternative fuels in your region and be part of the data collection effort for the report, please have them contact:

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